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A parting scene with Napoleon.

Death of the Vivandiere

The Bridge.

Tom escapes being made into Mince-meat.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

A HASTY RESOLUTION.

In my last chapter I brought my reader to that portion of my story which formed the turning point of my destiny; and here I might, perhaps, conclude these brief memoirs of an early life, whose chief object was, to point out the results of a hasty and rash judgment, which, formed in mere boyhood, exerted its influence throughout the entire of a lifetime. One only incident remains still to be told; and I shall not trespass on the good-natured patience of my readers by any delay in the narrative.

From being poor, houseless, and unknown, a sudden turn of fortune had made me wealthy and conspicuous in station—the owner of a large estate—almost a leading man in my native county. My influence was enabled to procure the liberation of M'Keown; and my interference in his behalf mainly contributed to procure for Fortescue the royal pardon. The world, as the phrase is, went well with me; and the good luck which attended every step I took, and every plan I engaged in, was become a proverb among my neighbours.

Let not any one suppose I was unmindful or ungrateful, if I confess, that, even with all these, I was not happy. No. The tranquil mind, the spirit at ease with itself, cannot exist where the sense of duty is not. The impulse which swayed my boyish heart still moved the ambition of the man. The pursuits I should have deemed the noblest and the purest, seemed to me, uninteresting, and ignoble—the associations I ought to have felt the happiest and the highest, appeared to me vulgar, and low, and common-place. I was disappointed in my early dream of liberty, and had found tyranny where I looked for freedom, and intolerance where I expected enlightenment; but if so, I recurred with tenfold enthusiasm to the career of the soldier, whose glories were ever before me. That noble path had not deceived me—far from it: its wild and whirlwind excitement, its hazardous enterprise, its ever-present dangers, were stimulants I loved and gloried in. All the chances and changes of a peaceful life were poor and mean, compared to the hourly vicissitudes of war. I knew not then, it is true, how much of enjoyment I derived from forgetfulness—how many of my springs of happiness flowed from that pre-occupation which prevented my dwelling on the only passion that ever stirred my heart—my love for one whose love was hopeless.

How thoroughly will the character of an early love tinge the whole of a life! Our affections are like flowers: they derive their sweetness and their bloom from the soil in which they grow—some budding in joy and gladness, amid the tinkling plash of a glittering

fountain, live on ever bright and beautiful; others, struggling on 'mid thorns and wild weeds, overshadowed by gloom, preserve their early impressions to the last—their very sweetness tells of sadness.

To conquer the memory of this hopeless passion, I tried a hundred ways. I endeavoured, by giving myself up to the duties of a country gentleman, to become absorbed in all the cares and pursuits which had such interest for my neighbours. Failing in this, I became a sportsman. I kept horses and dogs, and entered, with all the zest mere determination can impart, upon that life of manly exertion so full of pleasure to thousands—but here again without succeeding.

I went into society, but soon retired from it, on finding that, among the class of my equals, the prestige of my early life had still tracked me. I was, in their eyes, a rebel, whose better fortune had saved him from the fate of his companions. My youth had given no guarantee for my manhood; and I was not trusted. Baffled in every endeavour to obliterate my secret grief, I recurred to it now, as though privileged by fate, to indulge a memory nothing could efface. I abandoned all the petty appliances by which I sought to shut out the past, and gave myself up in full abandonment to the luxury of my melancholy.

Living entirely within the walls of my demesne, never seen by my neighbours, not making nor receiving visits, I appeared to many a heartless recluse, whose misanthropy sought indulgence in solitude. Others, less harshly, judged me as one whose unhappy entrance on life had unfitted him for the station to which fortune had elevated him. By both I was soon forgotten.

The peasantry were less ungenerous, and more just. They saw in me one who felt acutely for the privations they were suffering; yet never gave them that cheap, delusive hope, that legislative changes will touch social evils—that the acts of a parliament will penetrate the thousand tortuous windings of a poor man's destiny. They found in me a friend and an adviser. They only wondered at one thing—how any man could feel for the poor, and not hate the rich. So long had the struggle lasted between affluence and misery, they could not understand a compromise. Bitter as their poverty had been, it never extinguished the poetry of their lives. They were hungry and naked; but they held to their ancient traditions, and they built on them great hopes for the future. The old family names—the time-honoured memories of place—the famous deeds of ancestors, made an ideal existence, powerful enough to exclude the pressure of actual daily evils; and they argued from what had been, to what might be, with a persistency of hope it seemed almost cruel to destroy. So deeply were these thoughts engrained into their natures, they felt him but half their friend who ventured to despise them. The relief of present poverty—the succour of actual suffering, became in their eyes an effort of mere passing kindness. They looked to some great amelioration of condition—some wondrous change—some restoration to an imaginary standard of independence and comfort, which all the efforts of common interference fell sadly short of; and thus they strained their gaze to a

government, a ruling power, for a boon undefined, unknown, and illimitable.

To expectations like these, advice and slight assistance are as the mere drop of water to the parched tongue of thirst, and so I found it. I could neither encourage them in their hopes of such legislative changes as would greatly ameliorate their condition, nor flatter them in the delusion, that none of their misfortunes were of home origin; and thus, if they felt gratitude for many kindnesses, they reposed no confidence in my opinion. The trading patriot, who promised much, while he pocketted their hard earned savings; the rabid newspaper writer, who libelled the government, and denounced the landlord, were their standards of sympathy, and he who fell short of either, was not their friend.

In a word, the social state of the people was rotten to its very core. Their highest qualities, degraded by the combined force of poverty, misrule, and superstition, had become sources of crime and misery. They had suffered so long and so much; their patience was exhausted, and they preferred the prospect of any violent convulsion which might change the face of the land, whatever dangers it might come with, to a slow and gradual improvement of condition, however safe and certain.

To win their confidence at the only price they would accord it, I never could consent to, and without it, I was almost powerless for good. Here again, therefore, did I find closed against me another avenue for exertion, and the only one of all I could have felt a fitting sphere for my labour. The violence of their own passionate natures, the headlong impulses by which they suffered themselves to be swayed, left them no power of judgment regarding those whose views were more moderate and temperate. They could understand the high tory landlord, whom they invested with every attribute of tyranny, as their open, candid opponent. They could see a warm friend, in the violent mob-orator of the day; but they recognized no trait of kindness in him who would rather see them fed than flattered, and behold them in the enjoyment of comfort sooner than in the ecstacy of triumph.

From "Darby the Blast," for he was now a member of my household, I learned the light in which I was regarded by the people, and heard the dissatisfaction they expressed that one who "sarved Boney," should not be ready to head a rising, if need be. Thus was I in a false position on every side. Mistrusted by all, because I would neither enter into the exaggerations of party, nor become blind to the truth my senses revealed before me, my sphere of utility was narrowed to the discharge of the mere duties of common charity and benevolence, and my presence among my tenantry no more productive of benefit, than if I had left my purse as my representative.

Years rolled on, and in the noiseless track of time, I forgot its flight. I now had grown so wedded to the habits of my solitary life, that its very monotony was a source of pleasure. I had entrenched myself within a little circle of enjoyments, and among my books and in my walks my days went pleasantly over.

For a long time I did not dare to read the daily papers, nor learn the great events which agitated Europe. I tried to think that an interval of repose would leave me indifferent to their mention, and so rigidly did I abstain from indulging my curiosity, that the burning of Moscow and the commencement of the dreadful retreat which followed, was the first fact I read of.

From the moment I gave way, the passion for intelligence from France became a perfect mania. Where were the different corps of the "Grand army?" Where the Emperor himself? By what great stroke of genius would he emerge from the difficulties around him, and deal one of his fatal blows on the enemy? were the questions which met me as I awoke, and tortured me during the day.

Each movement of that terrible retreat I followed in the gazettes, with an anxiety verging on insanity, I tracked the long journey on the map, and as I counted towns and villages, dreary deserts of snow, and vast rivers to be traversed, my heart grew faint, to think how many a brave soldier would never reach that fair France, for whose glory he had shed his best blood.

Disaster followed disaster, and as the news reached England, came accounts of those great defections which weakened the force of the "Grand army," and deranged the places formed for its retiring movements.

They who can recall to mind the time I speak of, will remember the effect produced in England by the daily accounts from the seat of war, how heavily fell the blows of that altered fortune which once rested on the eagles of France—how each new bulletin announced another feature of misfortune, some shattered remnant of a great corps d'armée cut off by Cossacks, some dreadful battle engaged against superior numbers, and fought with desperation not for victory, but the liberty to retreat. Great names were mentioned among the slain, and the proudest chivalry of Gaul left to perish on the far off steppes of Russia.

Such were the fearful tales men read of that terrible campaign; and the joy in England was great, to hear that the most powerful of her enemies had at length experienced the full bitterness of defeat. While men vied with each other in stories of the misfortunes of the Emperor, when each post added another to the long catalogue of disasters to the grand army, I sat in my lonely house, in a remote part of Ireland, brooding over the sad reverses of him, who still formed my ideal of a hero.

I thought how, amid the crumbling ruins of his splendid force, his great soul would survive the crash, that made all others despair—that each new evil would suggest its remedy, as it arose, and the mind that never failed in expedient would shine out more brilliantly through the gloom of darkening fortune, than even it had done in the noonday splendour of success. When all others could only see the tremendous energy of despair, I thought I could recognise those glorious outbursts of heroism by which a French army sought and won the favour of their Emperor. The routed and straggling bodies which hurried along in

seeming disorder, I gloried to perceive could assume all the port and bearing of soldiers at the approach of danger, and form their ranks at the wild "houra" of the Cossack, as steadily as in the proudest day of of their prosperity.

The retreat continued. The horrible suffering of a Russian, winter, added to the carnage of a battle-tide, which flowed on unceasingly, from the ruined walls of the Kremlin to the banks of the Vistula. The battle of Borisow and the passage of the Bérésena followed fast on each other; and now, we heard that the Emperor had surrendered the chief command to Murat, and was hastening back to France with lightning speed, for already the day of his evil fortune had thrown its shadow over the capital. No longer reckoned by tens of thousands, that vast army had now dwindled down to divisions of a few hundred men. The Old Guard scarce exceeded one thousand, ; and of twenty entire regiments of cavalry, Murat mustered a single squadron as a body-guard. Crowds of wounded and mutilated men dragged their weary limbs along over the hardened snow, or through dense pine forests, where no villages were to be met with—a fatuous determination to strive to reach France, the only impulse surviving amid all their sufferings.

The defections of D'York and Massenbach then began that new feature of disaster, which was so soon to burst forth with all the fell fury of long pent up hatred. The nationality of Germany—so long—so cruelly insulted—now saw the day of retribution arrive. Misfortune hastened misfortune, and defeat engendered treason in the ranks of the Emperor's allies. Murat, too, the favourite of Napoleon, the King of his creation, deserted him now, and fled ignominiously from the command of the army.

The Elbe—the Elbe—was now the cry amid the shattered ranks of that army, which but a year before saw no limit to its glorious path. The Elbe was the only line remaining which promised a moment's repose from the fatigues and privations of months long. Along that road the army could halt, and stem the tide of pursuit, however hotly it pressed. The Prussians had already united with the Russians—the defection of Austria could not be long distant. Saxony was appealed to, as a member of the German family, to join in arms against the Tyrant; and the wild hourra of the Cossack now blended with the loud "Forwärts" of injured Prussia.

Where shall he seek succour now? What remains to him in this last eventful struggle? How shall the Emperor call back to life the legions by whose valour his great victories were gained, and Europe made a vassal at the foot of his throne? Such was the thought that never left me day or night. Ever present before me was his calm brow, and his face paler, but not less handsome than its wont. I could recal his rapid glance—the quick and hurried motion of his hand—his short and thick utterance, as words of command fell from his lips—and his smile, as he heard some intelligence with pleasure.

I could not sleep—scarcely could I eat. A feverish excitement burned through my frame, and my parched tongue and hot hand told how the very springs of health were dried up within me. I walked

with hurried steps from place to place, now muttering the words of some despatch—now fancying that I was sent with orders for a movement of troops. As I rode I spurred my horse to a gallop, and in my heated imagination believed I was in presence of the enemy, and preparing for the fray. Great as my exhaustion often was, weariness brought no rest. Often I returned home at evening, overcome by fatigue, but a sleepless night, tortured with anxieties, and harassed with doubts and fears, followed, and I awoke to pursue the same path, 'till in my weakened frame and hectic cheek the signs of illness could no longer be mistaken.

Terrified at the ravages a few weeks had made in my health, and fearful what secret malady was preying upon me, Darby, without asking any leave from me, left the house one morning at daybreak, and returned with the physician of the neighbouring town. I was about to mount my horse, when I saw them coming up the avenue, and immediately guessed the object of the visit. A moment was enough to decide me as the course to pursue ; for, well knowing how disposed the world ever is to stamp the impress of wandering intellect on any habit of mere eccentricity, I resolved to receive the doctor as though I was glad of his coming, and consult with him regarding my state. This would at least refute such a scandal, by enlisting the physician among the allies of my cause.

By good fortune, Dr. Clibborn was a man of shrewd common sense, as well as a physician of no mean skill. In the brief conversation we held together, I perceived that while he paid all requisite attention to any detail which implied the existence of malady, his questions were more pointedly directed to the possibility of some mental cause of irritation—the source of my ailment. I could see, however, that his opinion inclined to the belief that the events of the trial had left their indelible traces on my mind, which inducing me to adopt a life of isolation and retirement, had now produced the effects he witnessed.

I was not sorry at this mistake on his part. By suffering him to indulge in this delusive impression, I saved myself all the trouble of concealing my real feelings, which I had no desire to expose before him. I permitted him, therefore, to reason with me on the groundless notions he supposed I had conceived of the world's feeling regarding me, and heard him patiently, as he detailed the course of public duty, by fulfilling, which I should occupy my fitting place in society, and best consult my own health and happiness.

"There are," said he, "certain fixed impressions, which I would not so combat. It was but yesterday, for instance, I yielded to the wish of an old general officer, who has served upwards of half a century, and desires once more to put himself at the head of his regiment. His heart was bent on it. I saw that though he might consent to abandon his purpose, I was not so sure his mind might bear the disappointment, for the intellect will sometimes go astray in endeavouring to retrace its steps. So I thought it better to concede what might cost more in the refusal."

The last words of the doctor remained in my head long after he took his leave, and I could not avoid applying them to my own case. Was

not *my* impression of this nature?—were not *my* thoughts all centered on one theme as fixedly as the officer's of whom he spoke? Could I, by any effort of my reason or my will, control my wandering fancies, and call them back to the dull realities amongst which I lived?

These were ever recurring to me, and always with the same reply: It is in vain to struggle against an impulse which has swallowed up all other ambitions. My heart is among the glittering ranks and neighing squadrons of France. I would be there once more. I would follow that career which first stirred the proudest hopes I ever cherished.

That same evening the mail brought the news that Eugene Beauharnois had fallen back on Magdebourg, and sent repeated despatches to the Emperor, entreating his immediate presence among the troops, whom nothing, but Napoleon himself in the midst of them, could restore to their wonted bravery and determination. The reply of Napoleon was briefly—

"I am coming; and all who love me, follow me."

How the words rang in my ears—"*Tous cœux qui m'aiment!*" I heard them in every rustling of the wind and motion of the leaves against the window. They were whispered to my sense by every avenue of my brain, and I sat no longer occupied in reading as usual, but with folded arms, repeating word by word the brief sentence.

It was midnight. All was still and silent through the house. No servant stirred, and the very wind was hushed to a perfect calm. I was sitting in my library when the words I have repeated seemed spoken in a low clear voice beside me. I started up—the perspiration broke over my forehead and fell upon my cheek with terror, for I knew I was alone; and the fearful thought flashed on me—this may be madness! For a second or two the agony of the idea was almost insupportable—then came a resolve as sudden. I opened my desk and took from it all the ready money I possessed. I wrote a few hurried lines to my agent, and then, making my way noiselessly to the stable, I saddled my horse and led him out.

In two hours I was nearly twenty miles on my way to Dublin. Day was breaking as I entered the capital. I made no delay there, but, taking fresh horses, started for Skerries, where I knew the fishermen of the coast resorted.

"One hundred pounds to the man who will land me on the coast of France or Holland," said I to a group that were preparing their nets on the shore.

A look of incredulity was the only reply. A very few words, however, settled the bargain. Ere half an hour I was on board. The wind freshened, and we stood out to sea.

"Let the breeze keep to this," said the skipper, "and we'll make the voyage quickly."

Both wind and tide were in our favour. We held down channel rapidly, and I saw the blue hills grow fainter and fainter, till the eye could but detect a grey cloud on the horizon, which at last disappeared in the bright sun of noon, and a wide waste of blue water lay on every side.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN.

The snow, half melted with the heavy rains, lay still deeply on the roads, and a dark, lowering sky stretched above, as I hurried onwards, with all the speed I could, towards the east of France.

Already the Allies had passed the Rhine. Swartzenberg, in the south, Blucher in the east, and Bernadotte on the Flemish frontier, were conveying their vast armies to bear down on him whom, singly, none had dared to encounter. All France was in arms, and every step was turned eastwards. Immense troops of conscripts, many scarce of the age of boyhood, crowded the highways. The veterans themselves were enrolled once more, and formed battalions for the defence of their native land. Every town and village was a garrison. The deep-toned rolling of ammunition wagons, and the heavy tramp of horses sounded through the nights long. War, terrible war, spoke from every object around. Strongholds were strengthening, regiments brigading, cavalry organizing on all sides. No longer, however, did I witness the wild enthusiasm which I so well remembered among the soldiers of the army. Here were no glorious outbreaks of that daring spirit which so marked the Frenchman, and made him almost irresistable in arms. A sad and gloomy silence prevailed: a look of fierce, but hopeless, determination was over all. They marched like men to death, but with the step and bearing of heroes.

I entered the little town of Vervier. The day was breaking; but the troops were under arms. The Emperor had but just taken his departure for Chalons-sur-Marne. They told me of it as I changed horses; not with that fierce pride which a mere passing glance at the great Napoleon would once have evoked. They spoke of him without emotion. I asked if he were paler or thinner than his wont: they did not know. They said that he travelled post, but that his staff were on horseback. From this I gathered that he was either ill, or in that frame of mind in which he preferred to be alone. While I was yet speaking, an officer of engineers came up to the carriage, and called out—

"Unharness these horses, and bring them down to the barracks. These, sir," said he, turning towards me, "are not times to admit of ceremony. We have eighteen guns to move, and want cattle."

"Enough, sir," said I. "I am not here to retard your movements, but, if I can, to forward them. Can I, as a volunteer, be of any service at this moment?"

"Have you served before?—Of course you have though: in what arm?"

"As a hussar of the guard, for some years."

"Come along with me: I'll bring you to the general at once."

Re-entering the inn, the officer preceded me up stairs, and after a moment's delay, introduced me into the presence of General Letort, then commanding a cavalry brigade.

"I have heard your request, sir. Where is your commission? Have you got it with you?"

I handed it to him in silence. He examined it rapidly, and then turning the reverse, read the few lines inscribed by the minister of war.

"I could have given you a post this day, sir, this very hour," said he, "but for a blunder of our commissariat people. There's a troop here waiting for a re-mount, but the order has not come down from Paris, and our officials here will not advance the money till it arrives, as if these were times for such punctilio. They are to form part of General Kellerman's force, which is sadly deficient. Remain here, however, and perhaps by to-morrow——"

"How much may the sum be, sir?" asked I, interrupting.

The general almost started with surprize at the abruptness of my question, and in a tone of half reproof, answered—

"The amount required is beside the matter, sir; unless," added he, sarcastically, "you are disposed to advance it yourself."

"Such was the object of my question," said I calmly, and determining not to notice the manner he had assumed.

"*Parbleu*," exclaimed he; "that is very different. "Twenty thousand francs, however, is a considerable sum."

"I have as much, and something more, if need be, in my carriage—if English gold be no objection."

"No, *pardie*, that it is not," cried he, laughing; "I only wish we saw more of it. Are you serious in all this?"

The best reply to his question was to hasten down stairs, and return with two small canvas bags in my hands.

"Here are one thousand guineas," said I, laying them on the table.

While one of the general's aid-de-camps was counting and examining the gold, I repeated, at his request, the circumstances which brought me once again to France, to serve under the banner of the Emperor.

"And your name, sir," said he, as he seated himself to write, "is Thomas Burke, *ci-devant* captain of the eighth hussars of the guard. Well, I can promise you the restoration of your old grade. Meanwhile, you must take command of these fellows—they are mere partizan troops, hurriedly raised, and ill organized; but I'll give you a letter to General Damremont, at Chalons, and he'll attend to you."

"It is not a position for myself I seek, general," said I. "Wherever I can best serve the Emperor, there only I desire to be."

"I have ventured to leave that point to General Damremont," said he, smiling. "Your motives do not require much explanation. Let us to breakfast now, and by noon we shall have every thing in readiness for your departure."

Thus rapidly, and as it were by the merest accident, was I again become a soldier of the Emperor, and that same day was once more

at the head of a squadron, on my way to Chalons. My troop were indeed very unlike the splendid array of my old hussars of the guard. They were hurriedly raised, and not over well equipped, but still they were stout-looking, hardy peasants, who, whatever deficiency of drill they might display, I knew well would exhibit no lack of courage before an enemy.

On reaching Chalons I found that General Damremont had left with the staff for Vitry only a few hours before, and so I reported myself to the officer commanding the town, and was ordered by him to join the cavalry brigade then advancing on Vitry.

Had I time at this moment I could not help devoting some minutes to an account of that strange and motley mass which then were brigaded as imperial cavalry. Dragoons of every class, heavy and light-armed, grenadiers-a-cheval and hussars, cuirassiers, carbineers, and lancers, were all, pell-mell, mixed up confusedly together, and hurried onwards, some to join their respective corps if they could find them, but all prepared to serve wherever their sabres might be called for. It was confusion to the last degree, but a tumult without enthusiasm or impulse. The superior officers, who were well acquainted with the state of events, made no secret of their gloomy forebodings. The juniors lacked energy in a cause where they saw no field for advancement, and the soldiers, always prepared to imbibe their feelings from their officers, seemed alike sad and dispirited. What a change was this from the wild and joyous spirit which once animated every grade and class—from the generous enthusiasm that once warmed each bold heart, and made every soldier a hero! Alas! the terrible consequences of long defeat were on all;—the tide of battle that rolled disastrously from the ruined walls of the Kremlin still swept along towards the great palace of the Tuileries. Germany had witnessed the destruction of two mighty armies—the third and last was now awaiting the eventful struggle on the very soil of their country. The tide of fugitives, which preceded the retiring columns of Victor and Ney, met the advancing bodies of the conscripts, and spread dismay and consternation as they went. The dejection was but the shadow of the last approaching disaster.

On the night of the 27th January, the cavalry brigade, with which I was, received orders to march by the forest of Bar on Brienne, where Blucher was stationed in no expectation of being attacked.

The movement, notwithstanding the heavy roads, was made with great rapidity, and by noon on the following day we came up with the main body of the army in full march against the enemy. Then, once more, did I recognize the old spirit of the army. Joyous songs and gay cheers were heard from the different corps we passed. The announcement of a speedy meeting with the Prussians had infused new vigour among the troops. We were emerging from the deep shade of the wood into a valley, where a light-infantry regiment were bivouacked. Their fires were formed in a wide circle, and the cooking went merrily on, amid the pleasant song and jocund cries. Our own brief halt was just concluded when the bugles sounded to resume the march, and I

stood for a moment admiring the merry gambols of the infantry, when an air I well remembered was chanted forth in full chorus; but my memory was not left long in doubt as to where and how these sounds were first heard. The wild uproar at once recalled both, as they sang out—

"Hurrah for the Faubourg of St. Antoine!"

No sooner did I hear the words than I spurred my horse forward and rode down towards them—

"What regiment's yours, comrade?" said I to a fellow hurrying to the ranks.

"The fifth, *mon officier*," said he—"voltigeurs of the line."

"Have you a certain François, a maitre-d'-armes, still among you?"

"Yes, that we have. There he is, yonder, beating time to the roulade."

I looked in the direction he pointed, and there stood my old friend. He was advanced in front of a company, and with the air of a tambour-major, he seemed as if he was giving the time to the melody.

"Ah, *sacré* conscripts that ye are!" cried he, as with his fist clenched he gesticulated fiercely towards them. "Can't ye keep the measure? Once, now, and all together. Picardy first, and then ——"

"Holloa! Maitre François, can you remember an old friend?"

The little man turned suddenly, and, bringing his hand to the salute, remained stiff and erect, as if on parade.

"*Connais pas—mon Capitaine*," was his answer, after a considerable pause.

"What! not know me!—me, whom you made one of your own gallant company, calling me 'Burke of ours?'"

"Ah, *par la barbe de St. Pierre!* is this my dear comrade of the eighth? Why, where have you been? They said you left us for ever and aye."

"I tried it, Francois, but it wouldn't do."

"*Mille bombes!*!" said he, "but you're back in pleasant times—to see the Cossacks learning to drink Champagne, and leave us to pay the score. Come along, however—take your old place here. You are free to choose now, and needn't be a dragoon any longer;—not but that your old General will be glad to see you again."

"General D'Auvergne—where is he now?"

"With the light cavalry brigade, in front. I saw him pass here, two hours since."

"And, how looks he, François?"

"A little stooped, or so—more than you knew him—but his seat in the saddle seems just as firm. *Ventre bleu!* if he'd been a voltigeur, he'd be a good man those ten years to come."

Delighted to learn that I was so near my dearest and oldest friend in the world, I shook François' hand, and parted—but not without a

pledge, that, whenever I joined the infantry, the 5th Voltigeurs of the line were to have the preference.

As we advanced towards Brienne, the distant thundering of large guns was heard—which gradually grew louder, and more sustained, and betokened that the battle had already begun. The roads, blocked up with dense masses of infantry, and long trains of wagons, prevented our rapid advance—and when we tried the fields at either side, the soil, cut up with recent rains, made us sink to the very girths of our horses—still, order after order came for the troops to press forward, and every effort was made to obey the command.

It was five o'clock as we debouched into the plain, and beheld the fields whereon the battle had been contested—for, already, the enemy were retiring, and the French troops in eager pursuit. Behind, however, lay the town of Brienne, still held by the Russians, but now little better than a heap of smoking ruins—the tremendous fire of the French artillery having reduced the place to ashes. Conspicuous above all, rose the dismantled walls of the ancient military college—the school where Napoleon had learned his first lesson in war—where first he essayed to point those guns, which now with such fearful havoc, he turned against itself.

What a strange, sad subject of contemplation for him who now gazed on it! On either side, the fire of the artillery continued till nightfall—but the Russians still held the town. A few straggling shots closed the combat, and darkness now spread over the wide plain, save where the watchfires marked out the position of the French troops. A sudden flash of lurid flame, however, threw its gleam over the town, and a wild cheer was heard rising above the clatter of musketry. It was a surprise party of grenadiers, who had forced their way into the grounds of the old Chateau, where Blucher held his head-quarters. Louder and louder grew the firing, and a red glare in the dark sky told how the battle was raging.

Up that steep street, at top of which the venerable Chateau stood, poured the infantry columns in a run. The struggle was short—the dull sound of the Russian drum soon proclaimed a retreat—and a rocket darting through the black sky, announced to the Emperor that the position had been won.

The next day, the Emperor fixed his head-quarters at the Chateau, and a battalion of the guard bivouacked in the park around it. I had sent forward the letter to General Damremont, and was wondering when, and in what terms, the reply might come, when the general himself rode up, accompanied by a single aide-de-camp.

"I have had the opportunity, sir, to speak of your conduct in the proper quarter," said he, courteously, "and the result is, your appointment as major of the 10th Hussars—or, if you prefer it, the staff."

"Wherever, sir, my humble services can best be employed. I have no other wish."

"Then take the regimental rank" said he; "your brigade will see

enough of hot work, ere long—and now, push forward to Maiziere, where you'll find your regiment—they have received orders to march to-morrow early."

I was not sorry to be relieved from the command of my irregular horse, who went by the title of "brigands" in the army generally—though if truth were to be told, the reproach, on the score of honesty, came ill from those who conferred it. Still, it was a more gratifying position, to hold rank in a regiment of regular cavalry, and one whose reputation was second to none in the service.

"I wish to present myself to the colonel in command, sir," said I, addressing an officer, who, with two or three others, stood chatting at the door of a cottage.

"You'll find him here, sir," said he, pointing to the hut—but as he spoke, the clank of a sabre was heard, and at the same instant, a tall, soldier-like figure, stooped beneath the low door-way, and came forth.

"The colonel of the 10th, I presume," said I, handing the despatch from General Damremont.

"What! my old college friend, and companion," cried the colonel, as he stepped back in amazement—"have I such good fortune, as to see you in my regiment?"

"Can it be really so?" said I, in equal astonishment—"are you Tascher?"

"Yes, my dear friend—the same Tascher you used to disarm so easily at college—a colonel at last—but, why are you not at the head of a regiment long since? Oh! I forgot, though," said he, in some confusion—"I heard all about it; but, come in here, I've no better quarters to offer you—but, such as it is, make it yours."

My old companion of the Polytechnique was, indeed, little altered by time—careless, inconsiderate, and good-hearted as ever—he told me that he had only gained the command of the regiment a few weeks before—"and," added he, "if matters mend not soon, I am scarcely like to hold it much longer. The despatches just received, tell that the Allies are concentrating at Trannes—and if so, we shall have a battle against overwhelming odds. No matter, Burke, you have got into a famous corps—they fight splendidly—and my excellent uncle, his Majesty, loves to indulge their predilection."

I passed the day with Tascher, chatting over our respective fortunes; and in discussing the past and the future, the greater part of the night went over. Before dawn, however, we were on the march towards Chaumiere, whither the army was directed, and the Emperor himself then stationed.

It was the first of February, and the weather was dark, louring, and gloomy—a cold wind drove the snow-drift in fitful gusts before it, and the deep roads made our progress slow and difficult. As our line of advance, however, was not that by which the other divisions were marching, it was already past noon before we knew that the enemy was but three leagues distant.

On advancing farther, we heard the faint sounds of a cannonade,

and then they grew louder and louder, till the whole air seemed tremulous with the concussion.

"A heavy fire, colonel," said a veteran officer of the regiment. "I should guess there are not less than eighty or a hundred guns engaged."

"Press on, men, press on," cried Tascher. "When his Majesty provides such music, it's scarcely polite to be late."

At a quick trot we came on, and about three o'clock debouched in the plain behind Oudinot's battalions of reserve, which were formed in two dense columns, about a hundred yards apart.

"Hussars to the front!" cried an aide-de-camp, as he galloped past, and waved his cap in the direction of the space between the columns.

In separate squadrons we penetrated through the defile, and came out on an open plain behind the centre of the first line.

The ground was sufficiently elevated here, so that I could overlook the front line; but all I could see was a dense heavy smoke, which intervened between the two positions, in the midst of which, and directly in front, a village lay. Towards this, three columns of infantry were converging, and around, the sounds of battle were raging. This was La Giberie—the hamlet formed the key of the French position, and had been twice carried by, and twice regained from the allies. As I looked, the supporting columns halted, wheeled and retired, while a tremendous shower of grape was poured upon them from the village, which now seemed to have been retaken by the allies.

"Cavalry to the front!" was now the order, and a force of six thousand sabres advanced from between the battalions, and formed for attack. It was Nansouty who led them, and his heavy cuirassiers were in the van; then came the grenadiers à cheval; ours was the third, in column. As each regiment debouched, the word "Charge!" rung out, and forward we went. The snow drifting straight against us, we could see nothing, nor was I conscious of any check to our course, till the shaking of the vast column in front, and then the opening of the squadrons, denoted resistance, when suddenly a flash flared out, and a hurricane of cannon-shot tore through our dense files. Then, I knew that we were attacking a battery of guns, and not till then. Mad cheers, and cries of wounded men, burst forth upon the air, with the clashing din of sabres and small arms. The mass of cavalry appeared to heave and throe like some great monster in its agony. The trumpet to retreat sounded, and we galloped back to our lines, leaving above five hundred dead behind us, on a field where I had not yet seen the enemy. Meanwhile the Russians were assembling a mighty force around the village, for now the cannonade opened with tenfold vigour in front, and fresh guns were called up to reply to the fire. Hitherto all was shrouded in the blue smoke of the artillery, and the dense flakes of the snow-drift, when suddenly a storm of wind swept past, carrying with it both sleet and smoke, and now, within less than five hundred yards, we beheld the allied armies in front of us. Two of the three villages, which formed our advanced position,

already had been carried, and towards the third, La Rothiere, they were advancing quickly.

Ney's corps, ordered up to its defence, rushed boldly on, and the clattering musketry announced that they were engaged, while twelve guns were moved up, in full gallop, to their support, and opened their fire at once. Scarce had they done so, when a wild hurra was heard, and like a whirlwind, a vast mass of cavalry, the Cossacks of the Don, and the Uhlans of the south, commingled and mixed, bear down on the guns. The struggle is for life or death. No quarter given. Ney recalls his columns, and the guns are lost.

"Who shall bring the Emperor the tidings," said Tascher, as his voice trembled with excitement. "I'd rather storm the battery single-handed than do it."

"He has seen worse than that already to-day," said an aide-de-camp, at our side. "He has seen Lahories' squadrons of the dragoons of the guard cut to pieces by the Russian horse."

"The guard! the guard!" repeated Tascher, in accents where doubt and despair were blended.

"There goes another battalion to certain death," muttered the aide-de-camp, as he pointed to a column of grenadiers emerging from the front line. "See, I knew it well, they are moving on La Rothiere. But here comes the Emperor."

Before I could detect the figure among the crowd, the staff tore rapidly past, followed by a long train of cavalry moving towards the left.

"His favourite stroke," said Tascher: "an infantry advance, and a flank movement with cavalry."

And as the words escaped him, we saw the horsemen bearing down at top speed towards the village. But now we could look no longer; our brigade was ordered to support the attack, and we advanced at a trot. The enemy saw the movement, and a great mass of cavalry were thrown out to meet it.

"Here they come!" was the cry repeated by three or four together, and the earth shook as the squadrons came down. Our column dashed forward to meet them, when suddenly through the drift, we beheld a mass of fugitives, scattered and broken, approaching. They were our own cavalry, routed in the attempt on the flank, now flying to the rear broken and disordered.

Before we could cover their retreat, the enemy were upon us. The shock was dreadful, and for some minutes carried all before it; but then rallying, the brave horsemen of France closed up and faced the foe. How vain all the efforts of the redoubted warrior of the Dnieper and the Wolga against the stern soldier of Napoleon. Their sabres flashed like lightning glances, and as fatally bore down on all before them; and as the routed squadrons fell back, the wild cheers of *Vive l'Empereur* told that one great moment of success at least, atoned for the misfortunes of the day.

"His Majesty saw your charge, Colonel," said a general officer to Tascher, as he rode back at the head of a squadron. "So gallant a thing as that never goes unrewarded."

Tascher's cheek flushed as he bowed in acknowledgment of the praise, but I heard him mutter to himself the same instant—"Too late—too late!—fatal words they were—the presage of the mishap they threatened!

A great attack on La Rothiere was now preparing. It was to be made by Napoleon's favourite manœuvre of cavalry, artillery, and infantry combined, each supporting and sustaining the other. Eighteen guns, with three thousand sabres, and two columns of infantry, numbering four thousand each, were drawn up in readiness for the moment to move. Ney received orders to lead them, and now, they issued forth into the plain.

Our own impatience at not being of the number was quickly merged in intense anxiety for the result. It was a gorgeous thing, indeed, to see that mighty mass unravelling itself. The guns galloping madly to the front, supported on either flank by cavalry; while masked behind, marched the black columns of infantry, their tall shakos nodding like the tree tops of a forest. The snow was now falling fast, and the figures grew fainter and fainter, and all that remained within our view was the tail of the columns, which were only disengaging themselves from the lines. A deafening cannonade opened from the allied artillery on the advance, unreplied to by our guns, which were ordered not to fire until within half range of the enemy. Suddenly a figure is seen emerging from the heavy snow-drift at the full speed of his horse. Another, and another follows him in quick succession. They make for the position of the Emperor. "What can it be?" cries each in horrible suspense. See! the columns have halted. Dreadful tidings! The guns are imbedded in the soft ground—the horses cannot stir them—one-half of the distance is scarcely won—and there they are, beneath the withering cannonade of the allied guns, powerless and immoveable. Cavalry are dismounted, and the horses harnessed to the teams—all in vain—the wheels sink deeper in the miry earth; and now the enemy have found out the range, and their shot are sweeping through the dense mass with frightful slaughter. Again the aides-de-camp hasten to the rear for orders; but Ney can wait no longer. He launches his cavalry at the foe, and orders up the infantry to follow. Meanwhile a great cloud of cavalry issues from the allied lines, and directs its course towards the flank of the column. The Emperor sees the danger, and despatches one of his staff to prepare them to receive cavalry. Too late!—too late! The snow-drift has concealed the advance, and the wild horsemen of the desert ride down on the brave ranks. Disorder and confusion ensue. The column breaks and scatters. The lancers pursue the fugitives through the plain, and before the very eyes of the Emperor, the Guard—*his* Guard—are sabred and routed.

What is to become of our cavalry is now the cry; for they have advanced unsupported against the village? Dreadful moment of suspense! None can see them. The guns lie deserted, alike by friend and foe. Who dares approach them now? "They are cheering yonder," exclaimed an officer. "I hear them again."

"Hussars, to the front," calls out Damremont—"to your comrades'

rescue—Men, yonder;" and he points in the direction of the village.

Like an eagle on the swoop, the swift squadrons skim the plain, and mount the slope beyond it. The drift clears, and what a spectacle is before us! The cavalry are dismounted; their horses, dead or dying, cumber the ground; the men, sabre in hand, have attacked the village by assault. Two of the enemy's guns are taken, and turned against them; and the walls are won in many places.

An opening in the enclosure of a farm-yard admits our leading squadron; and in an instant we have taken them in flank and rear.

The Russians will neither retreat nor surrender; and the carnage is awful: for, though overpowered by numbers, they still continue the slaughter, and deal death while dying. The chief farm-house of the village has been carried by our troops; but the enemy still holds the garden. The low hedge offers a slight obstacle; and over it we dash; and down upon them ride the gallant 10th, with cheers of victory.

At this instant the crashing sound of cannnon-shot among masonry is heard. It is the allied artillery, which, regardless of their own troops, has opened on the village. Every discharge tells; the range is at quarter distance; and whole files fall at every fire. The trumpet sounds an retreat; and I am endeavouring to collect my scattered followers, when my eye falls on the aigulette of a general officer among the heap of dead; and at the same time I perceive that some old and gallant officer has fallen sword in hand, for his long white hair is strewn loosely across his face. I spring down from my horse, and push back the snowy locks, and with a shriek of horror I recognise the friend of my heart, General D'Auvergne. I lift him in my arms, and search for the wound. Alas! a grape-shot had torn through his chest, and cut asunder that noble heart, whose every beat was honour. Though still warm, no ray of life remained. The hand I had so often grasped in friendship, I wrung now in the last energy of despair, and fell upon the corpse in the agony of my grief.

The night was falling fast; all was still around me; none remained near; the village was deserted by both. The deafening din of the cannonade continued; and at times some straggling shot crashed through the crumbling walls, and brought them thundering to the earth—but all had fled. By the pale crescent of a new moon I dug a grave beneath the ruined wall of the farm-house. The labour was long and tedious; but my breaking heart took no note of time. My task completed, I sat down beside the grave, and taking his now cold hand in mine, pressed it to my lips. Oh! could I have shared that narrow bed of clay, what rapture would it have brought to my sorrowing soul. I lifted the body, and laid it gently in the earth; and as I arose, I found that something had entangled itself in my uniform, and held me. It seemed a locket, which he wore by a ribbon round his neck. I detached it from its place, and put it in my bosom. One lock of the snowy hair I severed from his noble head, and then covered up the grave.

"Adieu for ever," I muttered, as I wandered from the spot. It was the death of a true D'Auvergne "on the field of battle."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE BRIDGE OF MONTERAU.

Ere I left the village, a shower of shells was thrown into it from the French lines, and in a few minutes the whole blazed up in a red flame, and threw a wide glare over the battle-field. Spurring my horse to his speed, I galloped onward, and now discovered that our troops were retiring in all haste. The allies had won the battle, and we were falling back on Brienne.

Leaving seventy-three guns in the hands of the enemy, above one thousand prisoners, and six thousand killed in battle, Napoleon drew off his shattered forces, and marched through the long darkness of a winter's night. Thus ended the battle of Arcis-sur-Aube, the most fatal for the hopes of the Emperor since the dreadful day of Leipzic.

From that hour fortune seemed to frown on those whose arms she had so often crowned with victory; and he himself, the mighty leader of so many conquering hosts, stood at the window of the chateau at Brienne the whole night long, dreading lest the enemy should be on his track. He whose battles were wont to be the ovations of a conqueror, now beheld with joy his masses retiring unpursued.

Why should I dwell on a career of disaster, or linger on the expiring moments of a mighty empire? Of what avail now are the re-inforcements which arrive to our aid—the veteran legions of the Peninsula? The cry is ever—"Too late! too late!" Dreadful words, heard at every moment!—sad omens of an army devoted and despairing! From Brienne we retreat to Troyes—from thence to Bar-sur-Aube—ever nearer and nearer to that capital, to which the allies tend with wild shouts of triumph. On the last day of February our head-quarters are at Nogent—not thirty leagues from Paris—Nogent, with the great forest of Fontainbleu on its left, and Meaux, the ancient bishopric of the monarchy, on its right, and, behind that screen, Paris! Leaving Bourmont in command of the line which holds the Austrians in check, the Emperor himself hastens to oppose Blucher, the most intrepid and the most daring of all his enemies.

A cross-march in the depth of winter, with the ground covered with half-frozen snow, will bring him on the flank of the Prussian army. It is dared. Dangers and difficulties beset every step—the artillery are almost lost, the cavalry exhausted. But the cry of "The enemy!" rouses every energy; they debouch on the plain of Champ-Aubert, to fall on the moving column of the Russians under Alsufief. Glorious stroke of fate! Victory again caresses the spoiled child of fortune. The enemy is routed, and retires on Montmirail and Chalons. The advanced army of the Prussians hear the cannonade, and fall back to support the allies on Montmirail; but the Emperor already awaits them with the bat-

talions of the Old Guard, and another great battle ends in victory. Arcola and Rivoli were again remembered, and recalled by victories not less glorious, and, once more, hope returned to the ranks it seemed to have quitted for ever. Another dreadful blow is aimed at Blucher's columns, and Marmont attacks them at Vaux-Champs, and the army of Silesia falls back beaten; and now the Emperor hastens towards Nogent, where he has left Bourmont in front of the Austrians. "Too late! too late!" is again the cry. The column of Oudinot and Victor are already in retreat. Schwartzenberg, with a force triple their own, advances on the plains of the Seine. The Cossacks bivouack in the forest of Fontainbleu. Staff-officers hurry onward with the news that the Emperor is approaching: the victorious army which had subdued Blucher is on the march, reinforced by the veteran cavalry of Spain and the tried legions of the Peninsula. They halt, and form in battle. The allies arrest their steps at Nangis, and again are beaten. Nangis becomes another name of glory to the ears of Frenchmen.

Let me rest one instant in this rapid recital of a week whose great deeds not even Napoleon's life can show the equal of—the last flash o. the lamp of glory ere it darkened for ever. Three days had elapsed from the sad hour in which I laid my dearest friend in his grave, ere I opened the locket I had taken from his bosom. The wild work of war mingled its mad excitement in my brain with thoughts of deep sorrow, and I lived in a kind of fevered dream, and hurried from the affliction which beset me into the torrent of danger.

The gambler who cares not to win, rarely loses—so he that seeks death in battle, comes unscathed through every danger. Each day I threw myself headlong into some post where escape seemed scarcely possible, but recklessness has its own armour of safety.

On the field of Montmirail I was reported to the Emperor; and for an attack on the Austrian rear-guard at Melun, made colonel of a cuirassier regiment on the field of battle. Such promotions reigned on every side. Hundreds were falling each day. Many regiments were commanded by officers of twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. Few expected to carry their new epaulettes beyond the engagement they gained them in. None believed the empire itself could survive the struggle. Each played for a mighty stake. Few cared to outlive the game itself. The Emperor showered down favors on the heads which each battle-field laid low.

It was on the return from Melun I first opened the locket, which I continued to wear around my neck. In the full expansion of a momentary triumph, to see myself at the head of a regiment, I thought of him who would have participated in my pride. I was sitting in the doorway of a little cabaret on the roadside, my squadrons picqueted around me, for a brief halt; and as my thoughts recurred to the brave D'Auvergne, I withdrew the locket from my bosom. It was a small oval case of gold, opening by a spring. I touched this, and as I did so, the locket sprung open, and displayed before me a miniature of Marie de Meudon. Yes, beautiful as I had seen her in the forest of Versailles, her dark hair clustering around her noble brow, and her

eyes, so full of tender loveliness, were there, shadowed by their deep fringes, as I remembered them. The lips were half parted, as though the artist had caught the speaking expression; and as I gazed, I could fancy that voice, so musically sweet, still ringing in my ears. I could not look on it enough. The features recalled the scenes when first I met her, and the strong current of love against which so long I struggled and contended, flowed on with ten-fold force once more. Should we ever meet again—and how? were the questions which rushed to my mind, and to which hope and fear dictated the replies. The locket was a present from the Empress to the general—at least so I interpreted an inscription on the back, and this—shall I confess it—brought pleasure to my heart.

Like one whose bosom bore some wondrous amulet—some charm against the approach of danger—I now rode at the head of my gallant band. Life had grown dearer to me, without death becoming more dreaded. Her image next my heart made me feel as if I should combat beneath her very eyes; and I burned to acquit myself as became one who loved her. A wild, half-frantic joy animated me as I went, and was caught by the gay companions around me.

At midnight a despatch reached me, ordering me to hasten forward by a forced march to Monterau, the bridge of which town was a post of the greatest importance, and must be held against the Austrians till Victor could come up. We lost not a moment. It was a calm frosty night, with a bright moon, and we hastened along without halting. About an hour before daybreak we were met by a cavalry patrol, who informed us that Gerard and Victor had both arrived, but too late. Monterau was held by the Wurtemburg troops, who garrisoned the village, and defended the bridge with a strong force of artillery. Twice the French troops had been beaten back with tremendous loss, and all looked for the morrow, to renew the encounter. We continued our journey; and as the sun was rising, discovered, at a distance on the road beside the river, the mass of an infantry column. It was the Emperor himself, come up with the guard, to attack the position.

Already the preparations for a fierce assault were in progress. A battery of twelve guns was posted on a height to command the bridge. Another, somewhat more distant, overlooked the village itself. Different bodies of infantry and cavalry were disposed wherever shelter presented itself, and ready for the command to move forward. The approach to the bridge was by a wide road, which lay for some distance along the river bank, and this was deeply channelled by the enemy's artillery, which stationed on and above the bridge, seemed to defy any attempt to advance.

Never, indeed, did an enterprise seem more full of danger. Every house which looked on the bridge was crenelated for small arms, and garrisoned by sharp-shooters—the fierce jägers of Germany, whose rifles are the boast of the Vaterland. Cannon bristled along the heights, their wide mouths pointed towards that devoted spot—already the grave of hundreds. Withdrawn under cover of a steep hill, my regiment was halted, with two other heavy cavalry corps, awaiting

orders, and from the crest of the ridge I could observe the first movements of the fight.

As usual, a fierce cannonade was opened from either side, which, directed mainly against the artillery itself, merely resulted in dismantling a stray battery here and there, without further damage. At last the hoarse roll of a drum was heard, and the head of an infantry column was seen advancing up the road. They passed beneath a rock, on which a little group of officers were standing, and as they went, a cheer of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" broke from them. I strained my eyes towards the place, for now I knew the Emperor himself was there. I could not, however, detect him in the crowd, who all waved their hats, in encouragement to the troops.

On they went, descending a steep declivity of the high road, to the bridge. Suddenly the cannonade redoubles from the side of the enemy; the shot whistles through the air, while ten thousand muskets peal forth together. I rivet my eyes to watch the column, but what is my horror, to perceive that none appear upon the ridge: the masses move up—they mount the ascent—they disappear behind it—and then are lost to sight for ever. Not one escapes the dreadful havoc of the guns, which, from a distance of less than two hundred yards, enfilades the bridge.

But still they moved up. I could hear, from where I lay, the commands of the officers, as they gave the word to their companies. No fear nor hesitation there; they went to death. In less than fifteen minutes twelve hundred fell, dead or wounded, and at last the signal to fall back was given, and the shattered fragment of a column reeled back behind the ridge. Again the cannonade opened, and increasing on both sides, was maintained for above an hour, without intermission. During this, our guns did tremendous execution on the village, but without effecting any thing of importance respecting the bridge.

The grenadiers of the guard had reached the scene of combat, by forced marches from Nangis, and after a brief time to recruit their strength, were now ordered up. What a splendid force that massive column, conspicuous by their scarlet shoulder-knots and tall shakos of black bear-skin! With what confidence they move! They halt beneath the rock—the Emperor is there too—and see, the officer who stands beside him descends from the height, and puts himself at the head of the column: it is Guyot, the colonel of the battalion—he waves his plumed hat, in answer to the Emperor.—That salute is the last he shall ever give on earth. The drums rolls out; but the hoarse shout of "*en avant*" drowns their tumult. On they rush—they are over the height—they disappear down the descent—and see! there they are on the bridge! "*Vive la Garde!*" shout ten thousand of their comrades, who watch them from the heights—"*Vive la Garde!*" is echoed from the tall cliffs beyond the river. The column moves on, and already reaches the middle of the bridge, when eighteen guns throw their fire into it; the blue smoke rolls down the rocky heights, and settles on the bridge—broken here and there by flashes, like the forked gleam of lightning; the cloud passes over; the bridge is empty, save of dead and dying: the grenadiers of the guard are no more!

"What heart is his who gives his fellow-men to death like this!" was my exclamation as I witnessed this terrible struggle.

"The cuirassiers and carbineers of the guard to form by threes in column of attack," shouted an aide-de-camp, as he rode up to where I lay; and no more thought had I of *his* motives, who now opened the path of glory to myself.

The squadrons were arrayed under cover of the ridge; the shot and shells from the enemy's batteries flew thickly over us—a presage of the storm we were about to meet.

The order to mount was given; and as the men sprung into their saddles, a group of horsemen galloped rapidly round the angle of the cliff, and approached. One glance showed me it was the Emperor and his staff.

"Cuirassiers of the Guard," said he, as with raised chapeau he saluted his brave followers, "I have ordered two battalions to carry that bridge. They have failed. Let those who never fail advance to the storm. Monterau shall be inscribed on your helmets, men, when I see you on yonder heights. Go forward."

"Forward, forward!" shouted the mailed ranks, half maddened by the exciting presence of Napoleon.

The force was formed in four separate columns of attack, the 1st cuirassiers leading, followed by the carbineers of the guard, then my own regiment; and lastly, the fourth, the corps of poor Pioche. What would I have given to know he was there; but there was not time for such inquiry now. The squadrons were ready, awaiting the moment to dash on. A loud detonation of nigh twenty guns shook the earth; and in the smoke that rolled from them the bridge was concealed from view. A trumpet sounded, and the cry of "charge!" followed. The mass sprung forth. What a cheer was theirs, as they swept past. The cannonade opens again—the whole ground trembles. The musketry follows; and the clatter of a thousand sabres mingles with the war-cries of the combatants. It is but brief—the tumult is already subsiding; and now comes the order for the carbineers to move up. The cuirassiers have been cut to pieces. A few, mangled and bleeding, have reeled back behind the hill; but the regiment is gone.

"Where are the troops of Wagram and Eylau?" said the Emperor in bitterness, as he saw the one broken squadron, sole remnant of a gallant corps, reeling, blood-stained and dying, to the rear. "Where is that cavalry that carried the Russian battery at Moskowa? You are not what you once were!"

This cruel taunt at the very moment when the earth was steeped in the blood of his brave soldiers, was heard in mournful silence. None spoke a word, but with clenched lip and clasped hand sat waiting the command to charge. It came; but no cheer followed. The carbineers dashed on, prepared to die. What death so dreadful as the cold irony of Napoleon!

"*En avant!* cuirassiers of the 10th," called out the Emperor, as the last squadrons of the carbineers went by, "support your comrades. Follow up there, men of the fourth. I must have that bridge."

And now the whole line moved up. As we turned the cliff in full trot, the scene of combat lay before us. The terrible bridge now actually choked up with dead and wounded—the very battlements strewn with corpses. In an instant the carbineers were upon it; and struggling through the mass of carnage, they rode onward. Like men goaded to despair, they pressed on, and actually reached the archway beyond, which, defended by a strong gate, closed up the way. Whole files now fell at every discharge; but others took their places, to fall as rapidly beneath the murderous musketry.

"A petard to the gate," is now the cry—"a petard, and the bridge is won."

Quick as lightning four sappers of the guard rush across the road, and gain the bridge. They carry something between them, but soon are lost in the dense masses of the horse. The enemy's fire redoubles, the bridge crashes beneath the cannonade, when a loud shout is raised—

"Let the cavalry fall back."

A cheer of triumph breaks from the town as they behold the retiring squadrons. They know not that the petard is now attached to the gate, and that the horsemen are merely withdrawn for the explosion.

The bridge is cleared, and every eye is turned to watch the discharge which shall break the strong door, and leave the passage open. But unhappily the fuze has missed, and the great engine lies inert and inactive. What is to be done? The cavalry cannot venture to approach the spot, which at any moment may explode with ruin on every side; and thus the bridge is rendered impregnable by our own fault.

"Fatality upon fatality!" is the exclamation of Napoleon, as he heard the tidings. "This to the man who puts a match to the fuze!" said he, as he detaches the great cross of the legion from his breast, and holds its aloft.

With one spring I jump from my saddle, and dash at the burning match a gunner is holding near me, a rush is made by several others; but I am fleetest of foot, and before they reach the road, I am on the bridge. The enemy has not seen me, and I am half way across, before a shot is aimed at me. Even then a surprise seems to arrest their fire, for it is a single ball whizzes past. I see the train; I kneel down; the fuze is faint, and I stoop to blow it, and then my action is perceived, and a shattering volley sweeps the bridge. The high, projecting parapet protects me, and I am unhurt. But the fuze will not take. Horrible moment of agonising suspense, the powder is clotted with blood, and will not ignite. I remember that my pistols are in my belt, and detaching one, I draw the charge, and scatter the fresh powder along the line. My shelter still saves me, though the balls are crashing like hail around me. It takes, it takes, the powder spits and flashes, and a loud cry from my comrades burst out, "Come back! come back!"

Forgetting in the intense anxiety of the moment, I spring to my legs; but scarce is my head above the parapet, when a bullet strikes me in the chest. I fall covered with blood.

"Save him!—save him!" is the cry of a thousand voices, and a rush is made upon the bridge. The musketry opens on these brave fellows, and they fall back wounded and discouraged. Crouching beneath the parapet, I try to staunch my wound, but the blood is gushing in torrents, my senses are reeling, the objects around grow dimmer, the noise seems fainter; but suddenly I feel a hand upon my neck, and at the same instant, a flask is pressed to my lips. I drink, and the wine rallies me; the bleeding is stopped, my eyes open again, and dare I trust their evidence. Who is it that now shelters beneath the parapet beside me? Minette the Vivandiere! Her handsome face flushed; her eyes wild with excitement, and her brown hair in great tangled masses on her back and shoulders.

"Minette, is it indeed thee?" said I, pressing her hand to my lips.

"I knew you at the head of your regiment, some days ago, and I thought we should meet ere long. But lie still, we are safe here. The fire slackens too; they have fallen back since the gate was forced."

"Is the gate forced, Minette?"

"Ay, the petard has done its work; but the columns are not come up. Lie still till they pass."

"Dear, dear girl, what a brave heart is thine," said I, gazing on her beautiful features, tenfold handsomer from the expression which her heroism had lent them.

"You would surely adventure as much for me," said she, half timidly, as she pressed her handkerchief against the wound, which still oozed blood.

The action entangled her fingers in a ribbon. She tried to extricate them, and the locket fell out, opening by accident at the same moment. With a convulsive energy she clasped the miniature in both hands, and rivetted her eyes upon it. The look was wild as that of madness itself, and her features grew stiff as she gazed, while the pallor of death overspread them. It was scarce the action of a second; in another, she flung back the picture from her, and sprang to her feet. One glance she gave me, fleeting as the lightning flash, but how full of storied sorrow! The moment after, she was in the middle of the bridge. She waved her cap wildly above her head, and beckoned to the column to come on. A cheer answered her. The mass rushed forward, the fire again pealed forth, a shriek pierced the din of all the battle, and the leading files halt. Four grenadiers fall back to the rear, carrying a body between. It is the corpse of Minette the Vivandiere, who has received her death-wound.

The same evening saw me the occupant of a bed in the ambulance of the guard. Dreadful as the suffering of my wound was, I carried a deeper one within my heart.

"The Emperor has given you his own cross of the legion, sir," said the surgeon, endeavouring to rally me from a dejection whose source he knew not.

"He has made him a general of brigade, too," said a voice behind him.

It was General Letort who spoke—he had that moment come from

the Emperor with the tidings. I buried my head beneath my hands, and felt as though my heart was bursting.

"That was a gallant girl, that Vivandiere," said the rough old general. "She must have had a soldier's heart within that corsage. *Parbleu!* I'd rather not have another such in my brigade though, after what happened this evening."

"What is it you speak of?" said I faintly.

"They gave her a military funeral this evening, the fourth cuirassiers. The emperor gave his permission, and sent General Degeon of the staff to be present. And when they placed her in the grave, one of the soldiers, a corporal I believe, kneeled down to kiss her, before they covered in the earth; and when he had done so, he lay slowly down on his face on the grass. 'He has fainted,' said one of his comrades; and they turned him on his back. *Morbleu!* it was worse than that—he was stone dead—one of the very finest fellows of the regiment."

"Yes—yes, I know him," muttered I, endeavouring to smother my emotion.

The general looked at me, as if my mind was wandering, and briefly added—

"And so they laid them in the same grave, and the same fusillade gave the last honors to both."

"Your story has affected my patient over much, general," said the doctor. "We must leave him to himself for some time."

CHAPTER LXXXV.

FONTAINBLEAU.

An order from Berthier, written at the command of the Emperor, admitted me into the ancient palace of Fontainbleau, where I lay for upwards of two months under my wound. Twice had fever nearly brought me to the grave; but youth and unimpaired health succoured me, and I rallied through all. A surgeon of the staff accompanied me; and by his kind companionship, not less than by his skill, did I recover from an illness where sorrow had made an inroad not less deep than disease.

In my little chamber, which looked out upon the court-yard of the palace, I passed my days, thinking over the past and all its vicissitudes. Each day we learned some intelligence either from the seat of war or from Paris — defeat in one, treason and disaffection in the other, were rapidly hastening the downfall of the mightiest empire the genius of man had ever constructed. Champ Aubert, Montmirail,

and Monterau, great victories as they were, retarded not the current of events. "The week of glory" brought not hope to a cause predestined to ruin.

It was the latter end of March. For some days previous the surgeon had left me, to visit an outpost ambulance near Melun, and I was alone. My strength, however, enabled me to sit up at my window; and even in this slight pleasure my wearied senses found enjoyment after the tedious hours of a sick bed. The evening was calm, and, for the season, mild and summer-like; the shrubs were putting forth their first leaves; and around the marble fountains the spring flowers were already showing signs of blossom. The setting sun made the tall shadows of the ancient beech trees stretch across the wide court, where all was still as at midnight. No inhabitant of the palace was about—not a servant moved—nor a footstep was heard. It was a moment of such perfect stillness as leads the mind to reverie; and my thoughts wandered away to that distant time when gay cavaliers and stately dames trod those spacious terraces—when tales of chivalry and love mingled with the plashing sounds of those bright fountains, and the fair moon looked down on more lovely forms than even those fair marbles around.

I fancied the time when the horn of the Chasseur was heard echoing through those vast courts, its last notes lost in the merry voices of the *cortege* round the Monarch; and then I called up the brilliant group, with caracolling steeds and gay housings, proudly advancing up that great avenue to the royal entrance, and pictured the ancient ceremonial that awaited his coming—the descendant of a long line of kings. The frank and kingly Francis—the valiant Henry IV.—the "Grand Monarch" himself—all passed in review before my mind as once they lived, and moved, and spoke in that stately pile.

The sun had set, the mingled shadows threw their gloom over the wide court, and one wing of the palace was in deep shade, when suddenly I heard the roll of wheels and the tramp of horses on the distant road. I listened attentively. They were coming near. I could hear the tread of many together; and my practised ear could detect the clank of dragoons, as their sabres and sabretasches jingled against the horses flanks. Some hurried news from the Emperor, thought I; perhaps some marshal wounded, and about to be conveyed to the palace. The same instant the guard at the distant entrance beat to arms, and an equipage drawn by six horses dashed in at full gallop. A second, followed as fast, with a pelaton of dragoons at the side. My anxiety increased. What if it were the Emperor himself, thought I; but as the idea flashed across me, it yielded at once on seeing that the carriages did not draw up at the grand stair, but passed on to a low and private door at a distant wing of the palace.

The bustle of the *cortege* arriving was but a moment's work. The carriages moved rapidly away, the dragoons disappeared, and all was as still as before, leaving me to ponder over the whole, and actually ask myself could it have been reality. I opened my door to listen;

but not a sound awoke the echo of the long corridors. One could have fancied that no living thing was beneath that wide roof, so silent was all around.

A strange feeling of anxiety, the dread of something undefined, I knew not what, or whence coming, was over me, and my nerves, long irritable from illness, became now jarringly sensitive, and banished all thought of sleep. Wild fancies and incoherent ideas crossed my mind, and made me restless and uneasy. I felt, too, as if the night wrre unusually close and sultry; and I opened my window to admit the air. Scarcely had I drawn the curtain aside, when my eye rested on a long line of light that, issuing from a window on the ground-floor of the palace, threw its bright gleam far across the court-yard.

It was in the same wing where the carriages drew up—it must be so; some officer of rank, wounded in a late battle, was brought there. Poor fellow, thought I, what suffering may he be enduring amid all the peacefulness and calm of this tranquil spot. Who can it be? was the ever-recurring question to my mind, for my impression had already strengthened itself to a conviction.

The hours went on, the light shone steadily as at first, and the stillness was unbroken. Wearied with thinking, and half forgetful of my weakness, I tottered along the corridor, descended the grand stair, and passed out into the court. How refreshing did the night air feel—how sweet the fair odours of the spring, as, wafted by the motion of the *jet d'eau*, they were diffused around. The first steps of recovery from severe sickness have a strange thrill of youthfulness about them. Our senses seem once more to revel in the simple enjoyments of early days, and to feel that their greatest delight lies in the associations which gave pleasure to childhood. Weaned from the world's contentions, we seem to have been lifted, for the time, above the meaner cares and ambitions of life, and love to linger a little longer in that ideal state of happiness calm thoughts bestow; and thus, the interval that brings back health to the body, restores freshness to the heart; and, purified in thought, we come forth, hoping for better things, and striving for them with all the generous ardor of early years.

How happy was I as I wandered in that garden—how full of gratitude to feel the current of health once more come back in all my veins—the sense of enjoyment which flows from every object of the fair world restored to me, after so many dangers and escapes. As I moved slowly through the terraced court, my eye was constantly attracted to the small and star-like light which glimmered through the darkness; and I turned to it at last, impelled by a feeling of undefinable sympathy. Following a narrow path, I drew near to a little garden, which once contained some rare flowers. They had been favorites of poor Josephine in times past; but the hour was over in which that gave them a claim to care and attention; and now they were wild grown and tangled, and almost concealed the narrow walk which led to the door-way. I reached this at length; and as I stood, the faint moonlight, slanting beneath a cloud, fell upon a bright and glistening

object almost at my feet. I stepped back, and looked fixedly at it. It was the figure of a man sleeping across the entrance of the porch. He was dressed in Mameluke fashion; but his gay trappings and rich costume were travel-stained and splashed. His unsheathed scimitar lay grasped in one hand, and a turkish pistol seemed to have fallen from the other.

Even by the imperfect light I recognised Rostan, the favourite Mameluke of the Emperor, who always slept at the door of his tent and his chamber—his chosen body-guard. Napoleon must then be here. His equipage it was which arrived so hurriedly—his, the light which burned through the stillness of the night. As these thoughts followed fast on each other, I almost trembled to think how nearly I had ventured on his presence, where none dared to approach unbidden. To retire quickly and noiselessly was now my care; but my first step entangled my foot. I stumbled. The noise awoke the sleeping Turk; and with a loud cry for the guard he sprang to his feet.

"*La Garde!*" called he a second time, forgetting in his surprise that none was there; but then, with a spring, he seized me by the arm, and as his shining weapon gleamed above my head, demanded who I was, and for what purpose there.

The first words of my reply were scarcely uttered, when a small door was opened within the vestibule, and the Emperor appeared. Late as was the hour, he was dressed, and even wore his sword at his side.

"What means this?—who are you sir?" was the quick, sharp question he addressed to me.

A few words—the fewest in which I could convey it—told my story, and expressed my sorrow that, in the sick man's fancy of a moonlight walk, I should have disturbed his Majesty.

"I thought, sire," added I, "that your Majesty was many a league distant with the army——"

"There is no army, sir," interrupted he, with a rapid gesture of his hand; "to-morrow there will be no emperor. Go, sir, go, while it is yet the time. Offer your sword and your services where so many others, more exalted than yourself, have done. This is the day of desertion—see that you take advantage of it."

"Had my name and rank been less humble, they would have assured your Majesty how little I merited this reproach."

"I am sorry to have offended you," replied he in a voice of inexpressible softness. "You led the assault at Monterau? I remember you now. I should have given you your brigade, had I——" he stopped here suddenly, while an expression of suffering passed across his pale features; he rallied from it, however, in an instant, and resumed—"I should have known you earlier—it is too late! Adieu."

He inclined his head slightly as he spoke, and extended his hand. I pressed it fervently to my lips, and would have spoken, but I could not—the moment after he was gone.

It is too late!—too late!—the same terrible words which were uttered beneath the blackened walls of Moscow, repeated at every new

disaster of that dreadful retreat—now spoken by him whose fortune they predicted. Too late!—the exclamation of the proud marshal, harassed by unsuccessful efforts to avert the destiny he saw inevitable. Too late!—the cry of the wearied soldier. Too late!—the fatal expression of the Czar, when the brave and faithful Macdonald urged the succession of the King of Rome and the regency of the Empress.

Wearied with a wakeful night, I fell into a slumber towards morning, when I started suddenly at the roll of drums in the court beneath. In an instant, I was at my window. What was my astonishment to perceive that the court-yard was filled with troops. The grenadiers of the guard were ranged in order of battle, with several squadrons of the *chasseurs*, and the horse artillery; while a staff of general-officers stood in the midst, among whom I recognized Belliard, Montesquieu, and Turenne—great names, and worthy to be recorded for an act of faithful devotion. The Duc de Bassano was there, too, in deep mourning; his pale and care-worn face attesting the grief within his heart. The roll of the drums continued—the deep, unbroken murmur of the salute went on from one end of the line to the other. It ceased, and ere I could question the reason, the various staff-officers became uncovered, and stood in attitudes of respectful attention, and the Emperor himself slowly, step by step, descended the wide stair of the "Cheval Blanc," as the grand terrace was styled, and advanced towards the troops. At the same instant, the whole line presented arms, and the drums beat the salute. They ceased, and Napoleon raised his hand to command silence, and throughout that crowded mass not a whisper was heard.

I could perceive that he was speaking, but the words did not reach me. Eloquent and burning words they were, and to be recorded in history to the remotest ages. I now saw that he had finished, as General Petit sprung forward with the eagle of the first regiment of the guards, and presented it to him. The Emperor pressed it fervently to his lips, and then threw his arms round Petit's neck, while suddenly disengaging himself, he took the tattered flag that waved above him, and kissed it twice. Unable to bear up any longer, the worn, hard-featured veterans sobbed aloud like children, and turned away their faces to conceal their emotion. No cry of *Vive l'Empereur* resounded now through those ranks where each had willingly shed his heart's blood for him. Sorrow had usurped the place of enthusiasm, and they stood overwhelmed by grief.

A tall and soldier-like figure, with head uncovered, approached the Emperor, and said a few words. Napoleon waved his hand towards the troops, and from the ranks rushed many towards him, and fell on their knees before him. He passed his hand across his face and turned away. My eyes grew dim, a misty vapour shut out every object, and I felt as though the very lids were bursting. The great tramp of horses startled me, and then came the roll of wheels. I looked up; an equipage was passing from the gate, a pelaton of dragoons escorted it; a second followed at full speed; the colonels formed their men, the word to march was given, the drums beat out, the grenadiers moved

on, the chasseurs succeeded, and last the artillery rolled heavily up : the court was deserted, not a man remained—all, all were gone. The Empire was ended, and the Emperor, the mighty genius who created it, on his way to exile.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE CONCLUSION.

France never appeared to less advantage in the eyes of Europe than at the period I speak of. Scarcely had the proud star of Napoleon set, when the whole current of popular favour flowed along with those, whom, but a few days before, they accounted their greatest enemies. The Russians and the Prussians, whom they lampooned and derided, they now flattered and fawned on. They deemed no adulation servile enough to lay at the feet of their conquerors—not esteeming the exaltation of their victors sufficient, unless purchased at the sacrifice of their own honor as a nation.

The struggle was no longer who should be first in glory, but who foremost in desertion of him and his fortunes, whose word had made them. The marshals he had created, the generals he had decorated, the ministers and princes he had endowed with wealth and territory, now turned from him in his hour of misfortune, to court the favor of one, against whom every act of their former lives was directed.

These men, whose very titles recalled the fields of glory to which he led them, now hastened to the Tuileries, to proffer an allegiance to a monarch they neither loved nor respected. Sad and humiliating spectacle! The long pent-up hatred of the royalists found a natural vent in this moment of triumphant success. Chateaubriand, Constant, and Madame de Stael led the way to those declarations of the press, which denounced Napoleon as the greatest of earthly tyrants, and inveighed even against his greatness and his genius, as though malevolence could produce oblivion.

All Paris was in a ferment of excitement—not the troubled agitation of a people whose capital owned the presence of a conquering army, but the tumultuous joy of a nation intoxicated with pleasure. Fêtes and balls, gay processions, and public demonstrations of rejoicing, met one everywhere ; and ingenuity was taxed to invent flatteries for the very nations, whom, but a week past, they scoffed at as barbarians and Scythians.

Sickened and disgusted with the fickleness of mankind, I knew not where to turn. My wound had brought on a low, lingering fever, ac-

companied by extreme debility, increased, in all likelihood, by the harassing reflections every object around suggested. I could not venture abroad without meeting some evidence of that exuberant triumph by which treachery hopes to cover its own baseness; besides, the reputation of being a Napoleonist was now a mark for insult and indignity, from those who never dared to avow an opinion until the tide of fortune had turned in their favour. The white cockade had replaced the tri-color, every emblem of the empire was abolished, and that uniform, to wear which was once a mark of honourable distinction, was now become a signal for insult.

I was returning one evening from a solitary ramble in the neighbourhood of Paris—for, by some strange fatality, I could not tear myself away from the scenes to which the most eventful portions of my life were attached—and at length, reached the Boulevard of Mont-Martre, just as the leading squadrons of a cavalry regiment were advancing up the wide thoroughfare. I had hitherto avoided every occasion of witnessing any military display, which should recall the past; but now, the rapid gathering of the crowd to see the soldiers pass, prevented my escape, and I was obliged to wait patiently until the cortege should move forward.

They came on in dense column, the brave chasseurs of the guard—the bronzed warriors of Jena and Wagram—but to my eyes, they seemed sterner and sadder than their wont, and heeded not the loud vivas of the mob around them. Where were their eagles? Alas! the white banner that floated over their heads, was a poor substitute for the proud ensign they had so often followed to victory.

And here were the dragoons — old Kellerman's brave troopers. Their proud glances were changed to a mournful gaze upon that crowd, whose cheers they once felt proud of; and there, the artillery, that glorious corps, which he loved so well, did not the roll of their guns sound sorrowfully on the ear! They passed, and then came on a strange cortege of mounted cavaliers, old and withered men, in uniforms of quaint antique fashion; their chapeaux decorated with great cockades of white ribbon, and their sword knots garnished with similar ornaments. The order of St. Louis glittered on each breast, and in their bearing you might read the air of men who were enjoying a long wished for, and long expected triumph. These were the old seigneurs of the monarchy, and truly they were not wanting in that look of nobility their ancient blood bestowed. Their features were proud; their glance elated. Their very port and bearing spoke that consciousness of superiority, to crush which, had cost all the horrors and bloodshed of a terrible revolution. How strange! it seemed as if many of their faces were familiar to me. I knew them well. But where and how, my memory could not trace. Yes, now I could recall it: they were the frequenters of the old "Pension of the Rue Mi Careme," the same men I had seen in their day of adversity, bearing up with noble pride against the ills of fortune. There they were, revelling in the long sought after restoration of their former state.

Were they not more worthy of admiration in their hour of patient and faithful watching, than in this the period of their triumph.

The pressure of the crowd obliged the cavalcade to halt; and now the air resounded with the cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" the long forgotten cheer of loyalty. Thousands re-echoed the shout, and the horsemen waved their hats in exultation. "*Vive l'Roi!*" cried the mob, as though the voices had not called "*Vive le Empereur!*" but yesterday.

"Down with the Napoleonist—down with him!" screamed a savage looking fellow, who, jammed up in the crowd, pointed towards me, as I stood a mere spectator of the scene.

"Cry *Vive le Roi!* at once," whispered a voice near me, "or the consequences may be serious. The mob is ungovernable at a moment like this."

A dozen voices shouted out at the same time, "Down with him! Down with him!"

"Off with your hat, sir," said a rude looking fellow beside me, as he raised his hand to remove it.

"At your peril!" said I, as I clenched my hand, and prepared to strike him down the moment he should touch me. The words were not well uttered, when the crowd closed on me, and a hundred arms were stretched out to attack me. In vain all my efforts to resist. My hat was torn from my head, and, assailed on every side, I was dragged into the middle of the street, amid wild cries of vengeance and taunting insults. It was then, as I lay overcome by numbers, that a loud cry to fall back issued from the cavalcade, and a horseman, sword in hand, dashed upon the mob, slashing on every side as he went, mounted on a high mettled horse. He cleared the dense mass with the speed of lightning, and drove back my assailants.

"Catch my horse's mane," said he hurriedly. "Hold fast for a few seconds, and you are safe."

Following the advice, I held firmly by the long mane of his charger, while clearing away the mob on either side, he protected me by his drawn sabre above my head.

"Safe this time," said he, as we arrived within the ranks; and then turning round, so as to face me, added, "Safe! and my debt acquitted. You saved my life once, and though the peril seemed less imminent now, trust me, yours had not escaped the fury of that multitude without me."

"What, Henri de Beauvais—do we meet again?"

"Yes; but with altered fortune, Burke. Our king, as the words of our *Garde Ecossaise* song says, our king has "got his own again." The day of loyalty has again dawned on France, and a grateful people may carry their enthusiasm for the restoration, even as far as vengeance on their opponents, and yet not merit much reproach. But no more of this. We can be friends now; or if not, it must be your fault."

"I am not too proud, De Beauvais, either to accept or acknowledge a favour at your hands."

"Then we are friends," said he joyfully; "and in the name of

friendship, let me beg of you to place this *cordon* in your hat." And so saying, he detached the cockade of white ribbon he wore from his own, and held it towards me. "Well, then, at least remove the tricolor. It can but expose you to insult. Remember, Burke, its day is over."

"I am not likely to forget it," replied I sadly.

"Monsieur le colonel, his royal highness wishes to speak with you," said an aide-de-camp, riding up beside De Beauvais' horse.

"Take care of the gentleman for me," said De Beauvais, pointing to me, and then, wheeling round his horse, he galloped at full speed to the rear.

"I will spare you all trouble on my account, sir," said I. "My way lies yonder, and at present I see no obstacle to my pursuing it."

"Let me at least send an escort with you."

I thanked him, and declined the offer, and leaving the ranks of the procession, mingled with the crowd, and in a few minutes after reached my hotel without further molestation.

The hour was come, I saw plainly, in which I must leave France. Not only was every tie which bound me to that land severed, but to remain, was only to oppose myself singly to the downward current of popular opinion which now threatened to overturn every landmark and vestage of the empire. Up to this moment, I never confessed to my heart with what secret hope I had prolonged each day of my stay—how I cherished within me, the expectation that I should once again, though but for an instant, see her who lived in all my thoughts, and, unknown to myself, formed the main spring of all my actions.

This hope only became confessed, when about to leave me for ever.

As I busied myself in the preparations for departure, a note arrived from De Beauvais, stating that he desired particularly to see and confer with me, that same evening, and requesting me on no account to be from home, as his business was most pressing. I felt little curiosity to know to what he might allude, and saw him enter my room some hours later, without a single particle of anxiety as to his communication.

"I am come, Burke," said he, after a few common places had been exchanged between us. "I am come, Burke, on a mission which I hope you will believe. The sincerest regard for you has prompted me to undertake, and which, whatever objections it may meet with from you, none can arise, I am certain, on the score of his fidelity who now makes this proposition to you. To be brief. The Count D'Artois has sent me to offer you your grade and rank of his majesty, Louis XVIII. Your last gazette was as colonel; but there is a rumour you should have received your appointment as general of brigade. There will be little difficulty in arranging your brevet on that understanding; for your services, brief as they were, have not been unnoticed. Marshal Ney himself bears testimony to your conduct at Monterau; and your name twice occurs on the list of the minister of war for promotion. Strange claims these, you will say, to recompense from the rightful sovereign of France, gained as they were in the service of the

usurper; but it is the prerogative of legitimacy to be great and noble-minded, and to recognize true desert, whenever it occurs. Come. What say you? Does this proposal meet your wishes?"

"If to surpass my expectations, and to flatter my pride, were to convince my reason, and change my estimation of what is loyal and true, I should say, yes, De Beauvais, the proposition does meet my wishes. But not so. I wore these epaulettes first in my admiration of him whose fortunes I have followed to the last. My pride—my glory were to be his soldier. That can be no longer, and the sword I drew in his cause, shall never be unsheathed in another's."

"Are you ignorant that such arguments apply with equal force to all those great men who have, within these few weeks past, sworn allegiance to his majesty. What say you to the list of marshals? Not one of whom has refused the graciously offered favour of his majesty. Are Ney, Soult, Augureau, Mac Donald, and Marmont, nothing as examples."

"I will not say so, De Beauvais—but this I will say, they had both more respect and esteem from me had they done otherwise. If they were true to the Emperor, they can scarce be loyal to the king."

"Can you not distinguish between the forced services exacted by a tyrant and the noble duty rendered to a rightful sovereign."

"I can better estimate the fascinations which lead men to follow a hero, than to be the parade-soldier around the gilded gates of a palace.'

De Beauvais' cheek flashed scarlet, and his voice was agitated, as he replied—

"The nobles of France, sir, have shown themselves as high in deeds of chivalry and heroism as they have ever done in the accomplishments of true-born gentlemen."

"Pardon me, De Beauvais. I meant no imputation of them and their motives. There is every reason why you and your gallant companions should enjoy the favours of that crown your efforts have placed upon the head of the King of France. Your true and fitting station is around the throne your bravery and devotion have restored. But as for us—we who have fought and marched—have perilled limb and life to raise the fortune and elevate the glory of him who was the enemy of that sovereign—how can we be participators in the triumph we laboured to avert, and rejoice in a consummation we would have died rather than witness?"

"But it has come. The fates have decided against you. The cause you would serve is not merely unfortunate—it is extinct. The empire has left no banner behind it. Come, then, and rally around one whose boast it is to number among its followers the high born and the noble—to assert the supremacy of rank and worth above the claim of the base and low."

"I cannot—I must not."

"At least, you will wait on the Count D'Artois. You must see his Royal Highness, and thank him for his gracious intentions."

"I know what that means, De Beauvais. I have heard that few

can resist the graceful fascinations of the Prince's manner. I shall certainly not fear to encounter them, however dangerous to my principles."

"But not to refuse his Royal Highness," said he quickly. "I trust you will not do that."

"You would not have me yield to the flattery of a prince's notice what I refuse to the solicitations of a friend—would you?"

"And such is your intention—your fixed intention?'

"Undoubtedly it is."

De Beauvais turned away impatiently, and leaned on the window for some minutes. Then, after a pause, and in a slow and measured voice, added—

"You are known to the court, Burke, by other channels than those I have mentioned. Your prospects of advancement would be most brilliant, if you accept this offer. I scarcely know to what they may not aspire. Reflect for a moment or two.—There is no desertion, no falling off here.—Remember that the empire was a vision, and like a dream it has passed away. Where there is no cause there can be no fealty."

"It is but a sorry memory, De Beauvais, that only retains while there are benefits to receive. Mine is a more tenacious one."

"Then my mission is ended," cried he, "taking up his hat. I may mention to his Royal Highness that you intend returning to England—that you are indisposed to service at present. It is unnecessary to state more accurately the views you entertain?"

"I leave the matter completely to your discretion."

"Adieu, then. Our roads lie widely apart, Burke; and I for one regret it deeply. It only remains that I should give you this note, which I promised to deliver into your hands in the event of your declining to accept the Prince's offer."

"He blushed deeply, as he placed a small sealed note in my fingers; and, as if anxious to get away, pressed my hand hurriedly, and left the room.

My curiosity to learn the contents of the billet, made me tear it open at once; but it was not before I had perused it several times, that I could credit the lines before me. They were but few, and ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR—May I request the honour of a visit from you this evening at the Hotel de Grammont.—Truly yours,

"MARIE D'AUVERGNE.
"Née de Meudon.

"Colonel Burke."

How did I read these lines over again and again—now interpreting them as messengers of future hope, now fearing they might exclude every ray of it for ever. One solution recurred to me at every moment, and tortured me to the very soul. Her family had all been royalists. The mere accidents of youth had thrown her brother into

the army and herself into the court of the Empire, where personal devotion and attachment to the Empress had retained her. What if she should exert her influence to induce me to accept the Prince's offer? How could I resist a request, perhaps an entreaty from her? The more I reflected over it, the more firmly this opinion gained ground with me; and the more deeply did I grieve over a position environed by such difficulty; and ardently as I longed for the moment of meeting her once more, the desire was tempered by a fear that the meeting should be our last.

The eventful moment of my destiny arrived, and found me at the door of the Hotel de Grammont. A valet in waiting for my arrival conducted me to a *salon*, saying the Countess would appear in a few moments.

What an anxious interval was that. I tried to occupy myself with the objects around, and distract my attention from the approaching interview; but every sound startled me, and I turned at each instant towards the door by which I expected her to enter.

The time appeared to drag heavily on; minutes became like hours; and yet no one appeared. My impatience had reached its climax, when I heard my name spoken in a low, soft voice. I turned, and she was before me.

She was dressed in deep mourning, and looked paler, perhaps thinner, than I had ever seen her—but not less beautiful. Whether prompted by her own feelings at the moment, or called up by my unconsciously fixed look, she blushed deeply as our eyes met.

"I was about to leave France, Colonel," said she as soon as we were seated, "when I heard from my cousin, De Beauvais, that you were here, and delayed my departure to have the opportunity of seeing you."

She paused here, and drew a deep breath to continue; but leaning her head on her hand, she seemed to have fallen into a reverie for some minutes, from which she started suddenly, by saying—

"His Royal Highness has offered you, your grade in the service, I understand."

"Yes, madame; so my friend De Beauvais informs me."

"And you have refused—is it not so?"

"Even so, madame."

"How is this, sir? Are you so weary of a soldier's life that you would leave it thus early?"

"This was not the reason, madame."

"You loved the Emperor, sir," said she hastily, and with a tone of almost passionate eagerness, "even as I loved my dear, kind mistress; and you felt allegiance to be too sacred a thing to be bartered at a moment's notice.—Is this the true explanation?"

"I am proud to say, you have read my motives—such were they."

"Why are there not many more to act thus?" cried she, vehemently; "Why do not the great names *he* made glorious, become greater by fidelity than ever they were by heroism? There was one, sir, who, had he lived, had given this example to the world."

"True, most true, madame; but was not his fate happier than to have survived for this."

A long pause, unbroken by a word on either side, followed; when at last, she said—

"I had left with De Beauvais some few relics of my dear brother, hoping you would accept them for his sake. General D'Auvergne's sword—the same he wore at Jena—he desired might be conveyed to you, when you left the service. These, and this ring," said she, endeavouring to withdraw a rich brilliant from her finger, "are the few souvenirs I would ask you to keep for their sakes, and for mine. You mean to return to England, sir?"

"Yes, madame; that is, I had intended—I know not now whither I shall go. Country has few ties for one like me."

"I, too, must be a wanderer," said she, half musingly, while still she endeavoured to remove the ring from her finger. "I find," said she, smiling, "I must give you another keepsake—this will not leave me."

"Give it me, then; where is it?" said I. "Yes, Marie, the devotion of a heart, wholly yours, should not go unrewarded. To you I owe all that my life has known of happiness, to memory of you, every high and noble hope. Let me not, after years of such affection, lose the guiding-star of my existence—all that I have lived for—all that I love."

These words, poured forth with all the passionate energy which a last hope inspires, were followed by a story of my long-concealed love. I know not how incoherently the tale was told; I cannot say how often I interrupted my own recital by some appeal to the past—some half-uttered hope, that she had seen the passion which burned within me. I can but remember the bursting feeling of my bosom as she placed her hand in mine, and said—"It is yours."

These words ended the story of a life, whose trials were many, and encountered at an age in which few have braved the world's cares. The lessons I had learned, however, were acquired in that school, adversity, where few are taught in vain; and if the morning of my life broke in clouds and shadow, the noon has been not less peaceful and bright, and the evening, as it draws near, comes with an aspect of calm tranquility, ample enough to recompense every vicissitude of those early days, when the waves of fortune were roughest.

A Parting Word.

DEAR FRIENDS—

Time has hallowed the custom of a word at parting, and I am unwilling to relinquish the privilege. In the tale I have just concluded, my endeavour was to pourtray, with as little aid from fiction as might be, some lights and shadows of the most wonderful and eventful period of modern history—the empire of Napoleon. The character I selected for my hero was not all imaginary, neither were many of the scenes, which bear less apparent proofs of reality. The subject was one long meditated on before undertaken; but as the work proceeded, I felt at some places, the difficulty of creating interest for persons, and incidents removed both by time and country from my reader; and at others, my own inadequacy to an effort, which mere zeal could never accomplish. These causes induced me to deviate from the plan I originally set down for my guidance, and combined with failing health, have rendered what might have been a matter of interest and amusement to the writer—a task of labour and anxiety.

It is the first time I have had to ask my reader's indulgence on such grounds; nor should I now allude to it, save as affording the only apology I can render for the many defects in a story, which, in defiance of me, took its colouring from my own mind at the period, rather from the reflex of the events I related.

The moral of my tale is simple. The fatal influence, crude and uncertain notions of liberty will exercise over a career, which, under happier direction of its energies, had won honour and distinction, and the impolicy of the effort, to substitute an adopted for a natural allegiance.

My estimate of Napoleon may seem to some, to partake of exaggeration; but I have carefully distinguished between the Hero and the Emperor, and have not suffered my unqualified admiration of the one, to carry me on to any blind devotion of the other.

Having begun this catalogue of excuses and explanations, I know not where to stop, so, once more asking forgiveness for all the errors of these volumes, I beg to subscribe myself, in great respect and esteem,

Your humble and obedient servant,

HARRY LORREQUER.

Templeogue House, August 25th, 1844.

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